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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 006190

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#) [BG](#) [JI](#)

SUBJECT: DISSENT FROM A CHIEF ZIA ADVISOR

Classified By: CDA Judith Chammas; reason para 1.4(d)

11. (C) Summary: PMO insider Siddiqui told Charge at least 50 BNP MP's want to drop Jamaat Islami from the ruling coalition, acknowledged that the BDG has failed to recognize JMB's terrorist potential, and accused Tarique Rahman of arranging the release of Bangla Bhai's reputed number two. Siddiqui is a strong critic of Tarique and JI. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On December 14, Charge met for one hour with Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. Kamal Siddiqui. EconOff (note taker) accompanied.

13. (C) Siddiqui immediately raised the spate of attacks attributed to Jamaat'ul Mujahadin Bangladesh (JMB). He acknowledged BDG missteps, in particular its failure to recognize JMB's terrorist potential and the protection of senior JMB figures by influential BNP leaders. JMB, he said, is filled with former Jamaat Islami (JI) members who broke away when JI aligned with BNP. Some JI members, he said, maintain supportive links to JMB. When asked, Siddiqui declined to give names or more specific information. He also said: "There is no doubt that there are some foreigners helping JMB. There is a nagging suspicion that this is the work of 'the big brother.'"

14. (C) Charge told Siddiqui that wild speculation about Indian or Awami League (AL) involvement with the JMB undermined BDG credibility as a committed foe of extremism. The BDG, she added, would be judged by concrete actions, like its ability to arrest senior JMB leaders, prevent future attacks, and hold ruling coalition figures accountable for their ties to extremists. The USG, she noted, is willing to support the BDG's anti-extremism efforts, even though we have been disappointed by the BDG's lukewarm response to our offers of technical assistance in the JMB investigation.

15. (C) Siddiqui cited growing anger within the BNP over its partnership with JI. There are at least 50 MPs, he said, who do not support retaining JI as part of the alliance. He stated that he has mentioned his concerns to the Prime Minister, saying Bangladeshis view JI as an embarrassment to the BNP. JI "negates what I have stood for my entire life," recalling JI's notorious support for Pakistan during the 1971 Liberation War.

16. (C) Siddiqui stated that the Rapid Action Battalion had arrested Kamarul, Bangla Bhai's reputed deputy, but that an agitated Home Minister of State Babar had complained that he had been forced to release him quickly after the intervention of Tarique Rahman, PM Zia's son and heir apparent, acting at the behest of State Minister for Land Dulu. He referred to Tarique as "Wind Tunnel," a translation of the name of his Hawa Bhaban office. "Wind Tunnel has some psycho friends" that he listens to because of his lack of experience, Siddiqui groaned.

17. (C) Comment: Siddiqui made no reference to the previous day's arrest of JMB commander Ataur Rahman Sunny, made public five hours later at a RAB press conference; it is equally hard to believe that he was unaware of it or that he would not have mentioned it in the course of this conversation. Siddiqui has complained to us many times about Tariq, whom he views as unsophisticated and dangerous, but he remains loyal to PM Zia and the BNP.

CHAMMAS